

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 15-307

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: K Four Allotment Vegetation Treatments

Region and Game Management Unit: Region III, Units 17A and 19B

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- Prescott

Was the project presented to the LHPC?

YES[] NO[X]

Has this project been submitted in previous years? YES[] NO[X]

If Yes, was it funded? YES[] NO[] → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

Project Type: Mechanical Thinning and possible Prescribed Burning

Brief Project Summary: Mechanical Thinning and Prescribed Burning will help increase desirable browse species in the project area. Most of the project area is within Unit 17A, where mule deer are managed under alternative hunt guidelines.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit (% benefit per species) : Mule Deer (80%), Elk (20%)

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date: May, 2016

Project End Date: May, 2018

Environmental Compliance:

NEPA Completed: Yes[X] No[] N/A[]

Projected Completion Date: _____

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:
(Provide Attachment)

Yes[] No[] N/A[X]

Projected Completion Date: _____

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: N/A[X]

To be Completed by: _____

Projected Completion Date: _____

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:

\$ 20,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds:

\$10,000 CAGCS Funds (Index 06007)

Total Project Costs:

\$ 30,000

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print):

Aaron Hulburd

Address:

Prescott National Forest
2400 Melville Rd
Prescott, AZ 86301

E-mail:

ahulburd@fs.fed.us

Telephone: 928 777 5666

Date: August 31, 2015

AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

Jake Fousek, 928 583 4951

Project has been coordinated with: Jake Fousek – WM Units 17AB, James Gilsdorf – PNF Chino Valley District Ranger, Marcus Munis – NRCS, Wade Albrect – AGFD Landowner Relations, Dan Garcia De La Cadena – PNF Biologist

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

The vegetation in the project area consists mainly of pinyon-juniper plant communities. When tree canopies become relatively dense (above about 30% cover) there is typically a reduction in the herbaceous plant cover from grasses and forbs due to the competition for water, nutrients, and sunlight. It is desirable to maintain openings in pinyon-juniper types where the soils are productive and can sustain herbaceous vegetation. Creating a mix of vegetation structure such as grass-dominated openings, and a mosaic of openings in the shrub layer increases the habitat quality for wildlife, and provides more usable forage for wildlife and livestock.

Canopy cover from shrub species is moderately to extremely thick in some locations to the extent that herbaceous forage is reduced or absent. A substantial portion of the forage base in the project area is provided by desirable browse species such as mountain mahogany, deerbrush, Apache plume, and silktassel. Perennial grasses can be locally abundant, especially in juniper woodlands that have been previously treated to remove the juniper overstory.



Example of K Four USFS Allotment without juniper treatment.

The area adjacent to the project area on private land has had extensive vegetation treatments and the results are very favorable for wildlife.



Example of K Four Private Land juniper treatment adjacent to project area.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Juniper cutting and prescribed burning activities are proposed within the project area in order to improve the sustainability and resiliency of the various vegetative communities and fire-adapted ecosystems. Providing openings in woodlands and within chaparral communities will create an increase in structural and compositional habitat diversity while improving forage availability for wildlife.

The following treatments are proposed:

1. Juniper cutting without prescribed burning – 384 acres.
2. Juniper cutting and possible prescribed burning follow-up treatment – 1,658 acres.
3. Group selection juniper thinning with possible follow-up burning – 1,064 acres.
4. Spot mechanical thinning with prescribed burning – 3,382 acres.
5. Targeted prescribed burning – 7,380 acres.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

(How will you implement project)

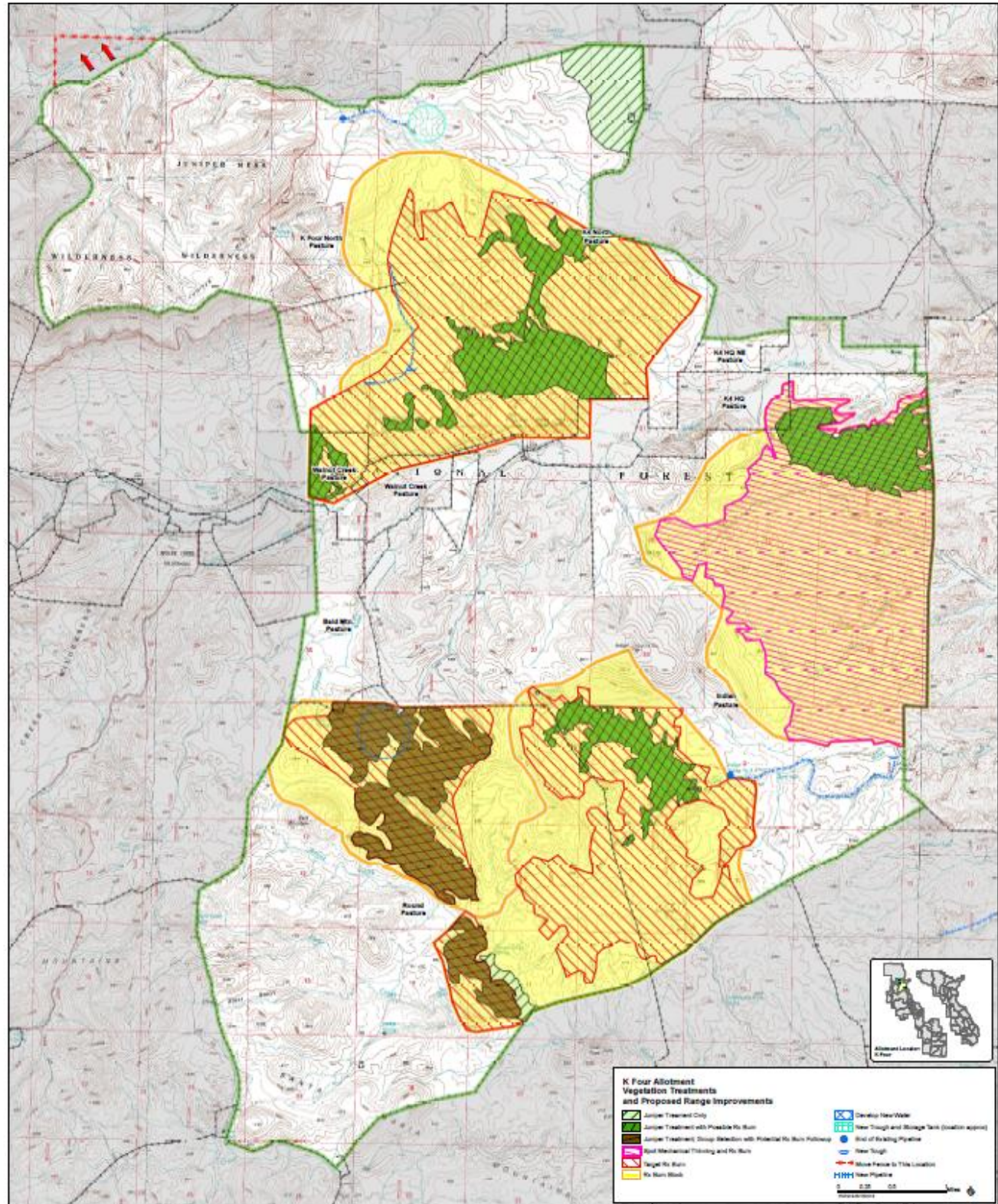
The juniper treatments will be completed by a combination of mechanical and hand-cut treatments. The K Four Ranch will be funding mechanical treatments with their own equipment and labor. The amount of funding/match is unknown at the time of this writing, and is not

captured as match funding on this proposal.

The Prescott National Forest will be contracting hand-cutting of junipers in areas not conducive to or cleared for mechanical treatments.

The Prescott National Forest will be following up selected treatments with prescribed burning.

PROJECT LOCATION



LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

(If the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

- Land Ownership is USFS, Prescott National Forest.

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A COOPERATIVE BIG GAME STEWARDSHIP or LANDOWNER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

YES[] NO[] N/A[]

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The project area consists mainly of pinyon-juniper woodlands. The understory varies from dense chaparral, to mixed shrubs and grasses, to woodland/grassland mix. Elevation ranges from about 5,000 to 6,000 feet.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

\$20,000 to be used to contract juniper removal and possible follow up prescribed fire activities by PNF fire crews.

Cost Share or Matching Funds (for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below)

\$10,000 of Central Arizona Grasslands Conservation Strategy (CAGCS) funds to be used to contract juniper removal and possible prescribed fire activities by PNF fire crews.

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Prescott National Forest

- Administer/Coordinate vegetation treatments projects on the K Four Allotment.
- Work with contractors to complete juniper removal work.
- Provide fire crew to conduct prescribed burning activities in portions of the project area.
- Ensure NEPA and Archaeological clearances are complete (NEPA completed, Arch clearances complete in most of the project areas).

K Four Ranch

- Complete mechanical juniper removal in portions of the project area.

Arizona Game and Fish Department

- Provide guidance and administrative project support to the PNF during implementation.

WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?

YES[] NO[] N/A[X]

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

The Prescott National Forest staff will use three types of monitoring in this project area – implementation monitoring, periodic monitoring of short-term indicators of resource conditions, and effectiveness monitoring.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

N/A

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

A project completion report will be filed by the Prescott Forest Fuels Specialist, Aaron Hulburd or his Acting, in collaboration with the Chino Valley Ranger District Fire Management Officer, the Prescott National Forest Deputy Fire Staff, and Forest Wildlife Biologist. Aaron Hulburd will maintain contact with wildlife managers through the project to provide informal and formal status updates.

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (please use the worksheet below):

N/A.

TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS (please use the worksheet below):

N/A. Project to be administered by the Prescott National Forest. No work will be done by state contractors.

ATTACHMENTS:

(Please provide cultural clearance documentation from land management agency, e.g., FONSI, Inventory Standards, etc. Also attach any project pictures)

USFS Decision Notice and Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is attached.